

Skiing Through Colorado and Beyond

As travel agents for twenty-nine years, my wife, Debby, and I have had the opportunity to visit many destinations. Not only have we gained first-hand knowledge on where to go and what to do, but we have learned a lot from our clients, whose interests and knowledge often go beyond ours. So when people ask, "Where have you been that's great?" the response is usually "What do you like to do?" If skiing is your choice, I think the following suggestions will be helpful.

For starters, it is hard to beat Breckenridge, Colorado, for just about everything. Besides offering four mountains that cover every level of skiing ability, it is the best place we have found for beginner skiers and families new to skiing. Breckenridge offers over twenty beginner runs, all serviced by easy-to-ride, high-speed chair lifts. There are scenic ski-in mountain restaurants and lots of nice people.



Breckenridge, Colorado
(courtesy Vail Resort Association).

Breckenridge provides ski lessons tailored to kids and families as well as group lessons with people of similar ages, geared to all skill levels.

The town of Breckenridge is also one of the best ski towns we have been to, with an Old West look and plenty of shops, bars, and restaurants all within easy walking distance from wherever you are staying. Best of all, Breckenridge is located less than two hours from Denver Airport. For accommodations, I highly recommend the Beaver Run Resort. They offer efficiencies and one- and two-bedroom units with log-burning fireplaces and a ski-in / ski-out location on the mountain. Add an indoor/outdoor pool, hot tubs, restaurants, and shops, and we have, as one of our clients described it, something close to "a cruise ship on land."

For couples, Telluride, Colorado, is a little difficult to get to, but well worth the effort. The town of Telluride still looks a lot like it did during the Gold Rush days—a quaint mountain town situated in a very scenic box canyon. Because of its location, there are very few day skiers, and that means no lift lines. Besides the town, there is also a mountain village at the top of the gondola—the "modern" side of Telluride, with great condominium complexes, shopping, and dining. Debby and I like staying in the old town, walking, shopping, and checking out the many "saloons" and restaurants. It's just fun to have a beer with some of the locals. Although there are several good hotels and many condominiums we could recommend, I think the condos are more affordable for families or couples traveling together. You don't need a car because the town offers a free shuttle that will get you to the gondola from wherever you are staying.

Every couple who skis should at least plan one trip to the Chateau Lake Louise Hotel in Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada. This is a spectacular hotel in a very romantic setting. It sits high in the Canadian Rockies on a beautiful mountain lake, and when the lake freezes over the hotel builds an ice castle right on it. At times, they will even set up a bar inside the castle. There is not much there besides the Chateau and the Lake Louise Ski Area, so four or five days would do it. The Lake Louise Ski Area offers beautiful scenery but can be cold and windy. The nearby Sunshine Ski Area has more trails and is an easy drive from Lake Louise. The town of Banff also has a number of nice shops and restaurants and, depending on the strength of the dollar, a few bargains also.

If you like to ski or are just starting out, get out your list of places to go and add a western ski trip. Once you try it, you will keep coming back again and again—for us it has been over twenty-five years since we first packed up the family and went out west to learn to ski.

Jeff and Debby Underwood are the owners of Carlson Wagonlit Travel / Underwood Travel Associates in Carnegie.

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